

to reduce the risk to human well-being and important landscapes like municipal watersheds, as well as improve forest and rangeland health.

1. Fuel Treatments

Fuel treatments are designed to mitigate the risk of unwanted wildland fire to people, communities, and natural resources. Fuel treatments accomplish these goals by manipulating vegetation and/or removing/modifying wildland fuels to: reduce the potential severe wildland fire behavior, lessen post-fire damage, limit the spread and proliferation of invasive species and diseases, and maintain and restore healthy diverse ecosystems. Treatments were accomplished using prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, herbicides, grazing, or combinations of these and other methods. In addition to specific preplanned fuel treatment projects, current fire policy encourages the use of wildland fire to accomplish specific land management objectives that include hazardous fuel treatment in wildlands.

In spite of a very challenging fire season, the federal wildland fire management agencies treated 2.26 million acres of hazardous fuels on federal and adjacent lands through planned treatments. This is 167,673 more acres than in FY 2001. The total acreage also includes 385,871 mechanical treatment acres, 1.78 million prescribed fire acres, and 82,588 acres of other treatments. Of the total, 973,687 acres were treated in the wildland urban interface, a 25% increase over the FY 2001 wildland urban interface acres.

An additional 1.02 million acres of wildland fuels were treated on federal lands through wildland fire use. Wildland fire use is the management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives and ecosystem maintenance and restoration.

The combination of prescribed fuel treatments and wildland fire use resulted in 3.28 million acres being treated to mitigate hazardous conditions and restore forest and rangeland health.



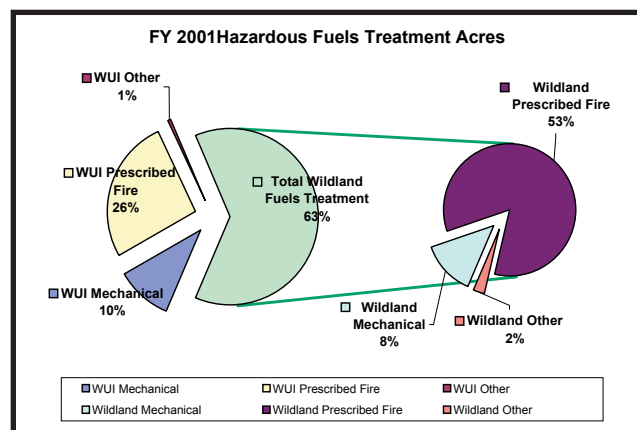
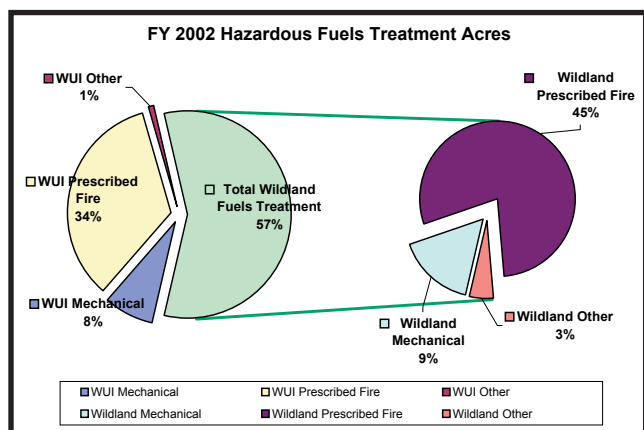
Goats Reduce Wildland Fire Risk – No Kidding!

Federal wildland fire management agencies are using innovative methods to reduce hazardous fuels. In May 2002, the Bureau of Land Management contracted with Western Weedeaters to provide 650 goats to eat through 40 acres of regrowth spread along three miles of fuel break near Igo, California. Not only did they eat fine fuels (grass, dead pine needles and leaves), larger re-sprouting vegetation (manzanita, small trees, and blackberry brushes), poison oak, and non-native noxious weeds, they also consumed the lower limbs of larger trees reducing ladder fuels and mimicking the effects of fire pruning.

2. Collaboration and Coordination

Program success requires continuing interagency coordination and collaboration with states, tribes, and local partners. To that end multiple collaborative efforts were accomplished or are underway. In 2002, the agencies:

- Developed and implemented a joint Forest Service and Department of the Interior memorandum defining the collaborative process for fuels project development and selection.
- Chartered a joint Forest Service and Department of the Interior National Fuels Coordination Committee. The committee consists of senior fuels management specialists who provide leadership, guidance, and consistency in development and implementation of an effective, interagency fuels management program to address risks from severe fires in wildland urban interface communities and to restore healthy





Hazardous Fuel Treatments Make a Difference

These two photos show the effects of fuel treatment on protection capability and risks to communities and people. The first photo shows the Long Mesa Fire in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado, during the summer of 2002. The larger photo is a post-fire view. The only green areas remaining are around the developed areas where the fuel treatment program had focused.



ecological systems in other wildland areas.

- Established a Fire Learning Network with The Nature Conservancy that selected 40 landscapes to concentrate efforts and demonstrate ecosystem restoration. In May, the first Fire Learning Network workshop was attended by more than 90 fire managers and scientists, whose work resulted in peer-reviewed ecological models, descriptions of fire regimes, and documentation of fuel treatment activity to-date.

3. Planning

Out-year project planning was an important aspect of the FY 2002 program of work to prepare for fuels reduction treatments in FY 2003 and beyond. Treatments must address high-priority needs, include local citizen-driven solutions, and be completed consistent with land use plans and environmental goals. With the added emphasis on wildland urban interface treatments, planning and consultation for fuels reduction projects involve more cooperators and a higher level of complexity than in the past.

In FY 2002, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior developed a Draft Interagency Cohesive Fuels Strategy. The draft provides interim guidance for the agencies to effectively target fuels treatments to highest priority areas. The draft strategy points the way to picking the optimal areas to treat and treatment methods to use, and does so in ways that address multiple concerns voiced by various segments of society. Early and frequent collaboration with stakeholders and applying lessons

learned from each project are key components of the strategy.

Fire Management Plans (FMP) are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires and implement non-fire fuel treatments based on an area's approved land management plan. In FY 2002, an interagency template was adopted to improve FMP consistency across agency boundaries and to facilitate developing multi-agency and landscape scale FMPs. Also in FY 2002, the federal wildland fire management agencies committed to updating or completing FMPs on all administrative units with burnable vegetation by FY 2004. All agencies are on schedule for meeting the FY 2004 deadline.

The LANDFIRE project was established to develop a comprehensive package of GIS based spatial data layers, models, and tools to support analyses for prioritization and planning of fuels treatments at both the national and local level. The spatial datasets for LANDFIRE will be maintained at a 30-meter pixel size. Work was initiated on pilot areas in Utah and Montana. These areas were selected based on ecological diversity, extensive plot data, and both previous and ongoing field work. Special care was taken to include both forested and non-forested ecosystems.

As part of the *Healthy Forests Initiative*, the President directed the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality and the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to "improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires." This effort includes examining